

WHAT CAN THE SCHOOLS DO IN THE RECOGNITION AND TREATMENT OF INCIPIENT MENTAL DISORDERS AND CRIMINAL TENDENCIES DURING SCHOOL AGE?

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There are two methods of learning: one is by imitation, the other by experience. All human beings come into this world with a greater or less ability for acquiring learning in these two ways. Educational methods and systems have been developed in order to systematize and expedite the learning of children so as to put them into the possession of the necessary information and abilities in as short a time as possible. Teaching aims to convey by precept and example, as well as by the direct imparting of knowledge, habits which will not only fit the child to take its place in the community, but also will make unnecessary the rediscovery of the knowledge which previous generations have accumulated. This body of knowledge, of raw facts, the results of the experience and of the originality of those who have gone before, has become so large as to overshadow other aspects of the general problem of education. The teaching profession is well aware of this and is constantly seeking opportunities for increasing the scope of the curriculum to include other things than mere acquisition of facts. Nevertheless, this is a slow process and educators everywhere have been forced to compromise somewhat. Consequently the schools are almost entirely concerned now with the imparting of knowledge. The school time is so short relatively, the numbers of children to be cared for are so great, and there is so much information to be given, that there is danger of an increasing emphasis on this side, at the expense of the training and use of individual abilities.

It is fortunate for the world that the large majority of children adapt themselves well to the present curriculum. A child who has the intelligence to profit by schooling in most cases has the other functions suf-

ficiently well developed to enable him to acquire habits of perseverance, of inhibition, of self-control, and of integrity. The experience with intelligence tests, for instance, has justified the assumption that in the great majority of children the tests are a fair sample of their general development. It may be assumed, unless there is evidence to the contrary, that the degree of development observed in the intelligence will reasonably represent the amount of ability in other fields which have not been sampled.

It is because this is true of so many children that the occasional exceptional child is frequently overlooked. The child who varies from the larger group, either in the direction of superiority or of inferiority, may present a different problem. In such cases it is not safe to generalize on the results of sampling. Failure to make suitable progress at school may be due to mental defect which can be determined. Frequently, however, it is due to other causes. In the same way superior achievement at school does not necessarily indicate superiority in other fields, and therefore does not justify the conclusion that this particular child is going to be unusually successful in the world. Only recently a startling crime has attracted the attention of the world to this type of problem. The results of intelligence tests in penitentiaries and reformatories further corroborate this idea. Among our delinquents and criminals we find the same average of intelligence which exists in the community at large. The institutions have the same share of superior and inferior individuals, proportionately, as the general population.

It is clear, then, that the degree of intelligence is not the decisive factor in determining the social success of an individual. The Institute for Juvenile Research, which developed originally in connection with the study of delinquency, has been forced to extend its horizon to include problems of personality and mentality which are outside the stricter range of delinquency. The need for this type of work has been strikingly illustrated during the past two years in a study which the Institute has been conducting at the LaSalle-Peru Township High School at LaSalle, Illinois. Mr. McCormack, the prin-

principal of the high school, has established what he has most aptly called the "Bureau of Educational Counsel", and has engaged a full-time psychiatric social worker to take charge of it. The function of the "Bureau" is to give help and advice to all the pupils of the school who have mental or personality difficulties of any sort, but particularly to those children who are possessed of adequate intelligence for the grade in which they are placed, but who are not keeping up with their classes. The psychiatric social worker investigates these cases, confers with the pupil, the teacher, the parents, investigates the social history of the child, and any other factors which might operate in causing the difficulty. All cases which the psychiatric social worker feels need special attention are referred to the psychiatrists and psychologists who go down to LaSalle from the Institute about once a month. As a result of this experience it appears that in a group of so-called normal, healthy children with sufficient intelligence to go through high school, there are numerous problems which are of serious significance to the future success and happiness of the child, which would entirely escape attention under the ordinary school routine.

Many types of problems have been dealt with. The most usual one, of course, is that of the child who is not properly placed in school, who either has not sufficient intelligence to do the grade of work which is expected of him and is therefore unhappy, or that of the child who has more than sufficient intelligence and should by rights be in a more advanced class, and is therefore bored by the work he is forced to do. These problems are relatively easy to adjust. The more difficult ones are those in which the child to all appearances is correctly placed in school and has adequate intelligence for his grade, but for some obscure reason is not well adjusted and is not keeping up with his class. Various reasons for these difficulties have been discovered, such as discrepancies in the home, social discrepancies produced by race, nationality, economic inequalities, physical defects, and so on. In many cases it has been possible to remove these discrepancies so that the child was enabled to do his school work satisfactorily and became better adjusted to his surroundings.

The problem to be faced by the psychiatrist is one of the adaptation of the individual to his environment, especially his social circumstances and conditions, with the object of obtaining the maximum efficiency and securing the highest possible rewards for the individual.

Theoretically, therefore, it is not enough for the educational system to determine the capacity of an individual and to provide him with the accumulated wisdom of our generation to the extent of his capacity. A further obligation rests upon the educational system, namely, that of determining the ability of the child to utilize both the acquired knowledge and his innate capacity to the fullest extent, through the use of such special powers as he may have, and by avoiding such weaknesses as he possesses. In consideration of this duty, the emotional life of the individual becomes of great importance. Tastes and desires, as well as repugnances and fears, are of great importance. One of the most difficult things for anyone, and especially for the young, is to determine what they really want, what they may want not only at the moment, but in the future. Even when they think they know what they want, will they be happy when it is secured? Many a person has been successful in all outward ways, but has carried with him a burden of disappointment or of frustration because of the thwarting of some youthful desire. This may be the case even where the satisfying of the original desire might not have meant success. The mere fact of having been thwarted may prove a difficulty.

In general it may be said that people are most contented when they are doing something which they can do very well. As a rule one likes to do what one can do well provided the doing of it is accompanied by recognition from one's fellow men. Most people are not strong enough to work against this. This is the outstanding characteristic, for instance, of criminals, who may be carrying out their particular criminal activities with a high degree of skill, and who may even have the respect and admiration of other criminals, but who nevertheless are oppressed by the fact that public opinion is against them and that their successes are illegal.

Professor Thomas has summed this up under four heads, which he calls the fundamental wishes of mankind: (1) the desire for security; (2) the desire for response; (3) the desire for variety of experience; and (4) the desire for recognition. Under the desire for response he groups among others some of the sex reactions, the response that the lover gets from the opposite sex, a personal and intimate response on the part of the immediate family or friends to his own personality. Under the desire for recognition he groups the general desires for applause and approval of the group in the larger sense, the public or the community.

In the actual application of mental science to this general problem the principal effort is directed towards the individual himself. The environmental factors, the social factors, can on the whole be taken for granted for the purposes of this special work. Changes and improvements to be effected, especially in the social environment, which is a problem affecting the sociologists, the educators and public officials, particularly the legislators, may be based upon the experience with the individual problems. For the purposes of this communication these larger aspects of the problem may be disregarded.

The first consideration in approaching a particular child is to determine his inherent capacity both intellectual and physical. This is well recognized now and is being carried out in most larger school systems in varying degrees. In evaluating inherent capacity, however, the determination of the actual functioning of the child as a whole is usually either entirely omitted or given but slight attention. It is not enough to know what the intelligence quotient is, whether a child is properly graded, what his ability is in various school subjects, or whether his body is reasonably well developed, but it is also important to know to what extent he can use his innate capacity, how his emotional control functions, whether he has difficulty in inhibiting dangerous impulses, what power of perseverance he has.

Here again the great majority of children present no great problem because of the fact that they are

average and therefore their individual variations will still be within the limits of normality, and experience will tend to correct whatever slight irregularities there may be. It is with the exceptional child, the one who varies from the general rule, that special evaluations may be of importance. Here, of course, as one of the most frequent causes for variation, the consideration of pathology is of importance. There is a normal variation which is expressed in a normal curve of distribution according to which some individuals are found to vary from the average for the group, where the sampling still is a fair expression of the entire organism. For instance, in regard to intelligence there are undoubtedly individuals who are superior or inferior when compared with the larger group. In the case of the low grades it is safe to assume that they are more or less evenly of low grade, that they will be more suggestible than others, more likely to surrender to difficulties, to be led by temptation, less likely to make an important contribution to the community life. But there are others in this group in whom the sampling of intelligence will not be a fair expression of the organism as a whole. In these cases one may find unexpected strength in other fields, perhaps a greater resistance against temptation, a greater conformity to the standards of the community, greater perseverance in the face of difficulties, more generosity or loyalty than one would expect on the basis of the intelligence level alone. The distribution of pathological variation is not correlated with the intelligence distribution, so that it may turn out that individuals who stand high in the scale of intelligence may also stand high in the scale of pathology. These are twisted, deformed personalities, in whom the intelligence is not an asset but a liability, who because of compelling desires or emotional weaknesses actually use their intelligence to further dangerous tendencies.

In order to meet this problem, the second step in the investigation consists in a search for discrepancies either within the child's organism or in the environment, or in the relation between the two. The search for these discrepancies should result in identification of all the major variations from the general standard of the com-

munity in which the child lives. Thus, for instance, a negro child in a white community, or a white child in a negro community, and all the other problems of race heterogeneity are to be listed as discrepancies. Again, a home should consist of natural parents, of the standard degree of security, including sufficient food, opportunities for recreation, for social intercourse, affection and home control and discipline, and all the other items which are regarded as necessary. A home in which one or several of these factors are not present, or not in sufficient degree to satisfy the ordinary standards, presents a discrepancy. The actual discrepancies are just as varied as human life, but the standard is always there.

A human being, healthy in body and mind, will ordinarily react to discrepancies by some effort at compensation. But if the discrepancy is too great on the one hand, or if the individual is too weak on the other, in any respect affecting the particular trouble, the attempt at compensation or adjustment will be more or less unsatisfactory and behavior disorders will inevitably result. A very strong person will react to even very severe discrepancies or obstacles in the environment with success. If the unfavorable condition is severe it ultimately results in increased strength by the acquired habits of overcoming it. This has been demonstrated over and over again in the lives of eminent people.

This has a very important bearing on the problem of habit training. In habit training we attempt to establish automatic responses in the child which will enable him to meet a difficult situation and solve it successfully. In carrying out such training the relative strength or weakness is of course of essential importance. A task which may be difficult for one may be easy for another. But the general conclusion remains that having learned by graduated steps to meet difficulties either by exerting more endeavor or by self control or inhibition, the habit gradually becomes established and ultimately will enable the child to meet successfully obstacles which without such training would have proved disastrous.

In the opinion of those who have worked in this field the school offers at present perhaps the best opportunity for considering such discrepancies, for evaluating

them, and for supplying the remedies. It is obviously not sufficient merely to sort and classify the children in this regard. This is the first step, but it is almost useless unless the schools are prepared to offer a remedy by training for such problems as may be discovered. In character training and habit training the emphasis for generations has been laid upon exhortation. But exhortation is not the only method, nor is it perhaps the best. The athletic trainers, the music and art teachers, in fact probably all educators, rely but little upon exhortation in their training methods. Another fallacy, it appears, has been the one that relegates character training to the home. It is assumed that the parents are, for some mysterious reason, just because they brought the child into the world, the proper agents for character training. This again is probably due to the fact that in the great majority of children a great deal can be taken for granted and the results have been good, not because the parents have been effective in training the children but because the children have been sufficiently equipped by nature with the means of acquiring protective habits. It is in the exceptions to the general rule that the fallacy becomes apparent. For instance, the principal discrepancy in a child's life may be that he has a dishonest or psychopathic parent. This is the very child that needs the greatest help. He cannot get it from his parents, nor is the school prepared to supply the lack. It must be obvious at once that the schools cannot be made responsible for all of it, but just as is observable now in connection with other branches of learning, there is an extension into the pre-school age, educational influences are making themselves felt more and more in the earlier years and it is proper to assume that if the schools emphasize habit training and character formation as part of their program an extension of this influence into the pre-school period will be an easy development.

In the actual treatment of an individual problem the remedies are briefly:

(1) The removal of such discrepancies as can be removed, either by treatment of the individual or by changes in the social environment. On the individual's

side this means a careful evaluation of the physical and mental factors, relieving any physical defects if possible, strengthening the weak places mentally, adjusting the teaching so far as possible to his particular need. Much has been done by the schools in this direction. On the environmental side and the social side it means closer contact between the school authorities and the family. It means education of the family as to its proper attitude toward the child, home discipline, recreation, health and hygiene.

(2) Strengthening by suitable practice of inhibitions, self-control, ambition, aesthetic tastes, and so forth, in the child himself. A great many of our social difficulties are due to habits of taste for vulgar pleasures, for vulgar associates, for dangerous excitement, and so on. The movement now going on in this state toward the increase of aesthetic appreciation might well be extended to the social side.

(3) Providing suitable outlets through constructive activities for such special abilities, even though relatively minor in degree, as the child may possess. This is in line with the idea that one likes to do what one can do well.

In all this training there is one principle that should be uppermost, namely, that it cannot be autocratically imposed on the child, whether it is a matter of home conditions, occupation, vocational training, or of taste. The object should be to accept the child as he is so far as possible, and to find for him the greatest expression of his personality in the direction of strength and security, to give him opportunities and outlets for his impulses as well as to surround him with proper stimulation in those directions. Public opinion is not enough to secure this. Public opinion merely sets the standard. Achievement of success depends on individual factors. It is fortunate of course that intensive individual work is unnecessary with the large majority. It is essential, however, with the minority who vary from the average. The success of the undertaking at the LaSalle High School is an indication of what can be accomplished.

Recommendations are now before the legislature which have as their object provisions for extending this type of service to all communities in the state, so as to enable the children of the state to obtain the greatest possible benefit from those abilities with which they are endowed.